

Bunty and Betaal Visit a Museum

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In the scorching heat of a May afternoon, Bunty was walking on an almost deserted road. He had to urgently buy sugar. When Bunty reached the shop, he was disappointed to see the shop closed. Bunty walked a bit further. As he walked, he got a strange feeling that there was someone following him. Anyway, the next shop was closed too. Bunty thought maybe it was best to go the main market. Bunty turned towards the road which led to the main market but strangely found himself walking towards the oldest and the biggest museum in the town.

Again Bunty got this strange feeling that someone was with him. Bunty was confused. What was happening to him? He left home to buy sugar but why was he walking towards the museum. Bunty got scared. He felt a nudge on his shoulder. He turned around to see. There was no one. The only thing Bunty could see was a handcart selling fruits on the opposite side of the road. Bunty thought maybe he was hallucinating. Bunty kept walking. He felt the nudge again. Bunty froze. Someone said with a jovial voice, "Howdy Bunty". Bunty replied, "Who is it there?". The answer came, " It is me..Betaal". Bunty stretched his eyes as much as he could but still he did not see anyone. The voice laughed, " Aah... Bunty you can't see me." Bunty did not know what to say. Betaal laughed again. He said,"Bunty, I am invisible. You can only hear me."

Bunty thought that someone was playing tricks with him. Bunty did not pay a heed. He kept walking. He could feel a very strong presence now. Betaal nudged Bunty and said, "Bunty..I am a vampire. You won't be able to see me. You know I hate sun." Bunty laughed,"You are kidding right?" Betaal said,"Nope. Let me show you something." With a blink of an eye, Bunty found himself in the premise of the biggest and oldest museum in the town." There was no end to Bunty's wonder. He thought that how did he come there. Betaal said,"Told you so!". Bunty said,"You can read my thoughts too!" Betaal said with a funny tone, "Once upon a time I could read all the ancient languages of the world." Bunty had no idea what was happening with him but he realised he was not scared anymore. Bunty started feeling good. Betaal said,"Trust your intuition Bunty and walk with me."



Bunty stood still. Betaal said, "I won't harm you Bunty." Bunty said, "How can I trust you?" Betaal told Bunty that his mother had already found an extra packet of sugar in the storeroom of his home. "Why don't you call your mother and ask her yourself." Bunty called his mother on his mobile phone. His mother said, "Oh Bunty, I had forgotten about the extra packet, No need to buy one more packet of sugar. Come back home. Lunch is ready. It is very hot outside." Bunty was startled. He hurriedly said to his mother, "Ok maa, I am coming soon." He cut the call and stared in blank air. This time the voice came from his left side unlike his right side as before. Betaal said, "So?". Bunty replied, "I need to go home. Maa said lunch is ready."

Betaal said, "Hahah..don't worry about it. She has made bittergourd. You don't like it anyway." Instead of thinking about how Betaal knew what his mother had made for lunch, Bunty made a face when he heard bittergourd..karela..nooooooooo!



Betaal said, "Come on Bunty..I won't take much of your time." Bunty replied,"But the museum is so big!" Betaal told him that they would visit the museum super fast and he would not even know how time would pass by. Bunty felt the sudden urge to believe this invisible voice.

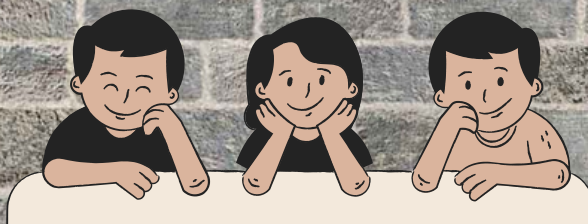
Bunty said,"OK!!! Let's do it". "That's the way to go Bunty...or maybe we will walk this way."



**Ever visited this museum
Bunty?**



Long long time ago, when I
was in primary school. It has
been a long time indeed.



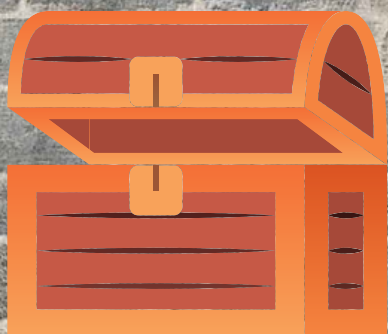
**And what happened
after that?**



**I don't know.
Never occurred to
visit it again.**



**No problem! Now
that you are here and
I am here, let me
show you a treasure
house.**



Treasure house? Here?



Here! These objects in the museum are no less than treasure. They stand for our natural heritage and tell the story of what humanity has achieved scientifically, socially and culturally so far.



**Every object has a story
behind it. Where did it
come from? Who made
it? What was its use?**



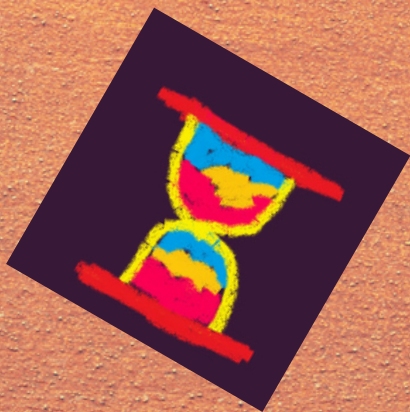
**Never thought this way.
You make it sound like a
mystery game.**



It is. Isn't it? When you think it this way, you will understand every object is a treasure in itself. They are keepers of memory. They have stood the test of time.



Every object belongs to a particular period in history. It speaks of the advancements made in art, culture, technology and society of that period.



Through these objects, museums educate us about our history. By making us curious about our own history, they make us think as well.



You are making these old objects come to life. As I am listening to you and walking across the museum, I have found things which I like to look at.



**Awesome!! What have you
found interesting?**



**I have always liked rocks.
The geology section in the
museum is good.**



Nice! What about specimen of plants, animals and dioramas?



**They are good too. But I like
the rock section most. What
do you like?**



Me? I like a pair of earrings in the museum collection . You will also find it interesting. Would you like to see it?



**Earrings? Jewellery? I don't
understand them.
Hahaha..but let's go and see it
too.**





Look at this! And now tell me. This is a pair of earrings made of silver and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan. It dates back to the 18th century.



This is so beautiful. The blue thing in the middle is good to look at. It looks like a stone. Is it a stone?



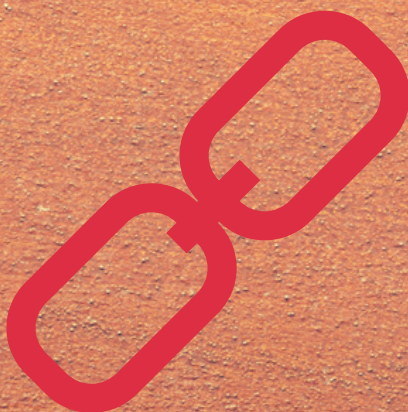
That blue stone in the middle is lapis lazuli my dear friend. Let me show you something in the geology section now. The one which is your favourite!



Can you see the blue stone in the top left corner of the cabinet? That, my dear, is lapis lazuli in its raw form. The one in the earring you saw is set in the earring by the makers of the jewellery. Do you see the connection now?



Yes. Objects in a museum are also connected. What we see at one place is also related to what we see in other sections of a museum.



Not only objects, when you visit a museum you should also look at the building or if I may say architecture of the museum you are visiting.



In this building , let's look at the stained glass windows. Observe the pink light in this hall. This light is filtered by a stained glass window. Look at the rose painted on the window.

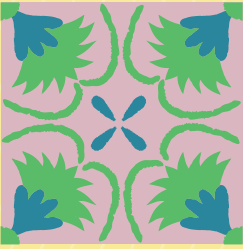






**And the creepers painted in
green on the window.
So many of them.**





And look at these huge doors and how cabinets and showcases are arranged. Look at the mosaic tiles on the floor.



**This must be a very old
building.**



**More than hundred
years old!**

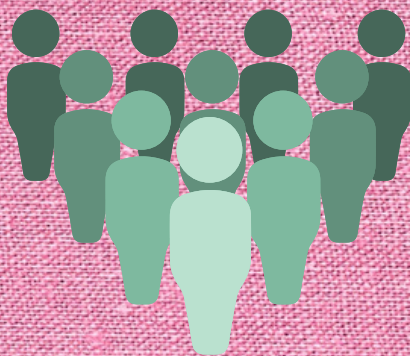
WOW!



Also don't forget to observe how visitors in the museum behave. Did you look at people here?

Did you make any observation?





I did. Some people are enjoying themselves. Some are focusing on the objects. Some are reading the information given near the objects. Some are listening to what other people have to say.



And I saw a person in the painting gallery who was looking at a huge painting so attentively. See, he is still looking at it.





Maybe he likes paintings just as
you like rocks. Maybe paintings are
rocks for him.





**So Bunty, what did you learn
in this museum visit? Did you
like the visit? What do you think
about it?**



Oh! I liked it a lot. There is so much to learn in a museum. The objects tell us about our history. We also get to know about different kinds of plants, animals and rocks.



and



**And we should also look at
the museum building to learn
about architectural features .**



and



And history and museums are not boring. If we visit museums after studying what is written in our history books, we will understand the subject in a much better way.



And people, Bunty, people. Never forget about them. End of the day, it is all about people and everyone is different.



As you saw, everyone was responding to the same museum and its objects in a different manner because we all are different from each other.





A good museum not only has beautiful objects but it is also welcoming to its visitors and serves all kinds of visitors.



True. It is not just about objects and information but also about people. Only objects and information make museums a dull place. But tell me something Betaal...how do you know so much about museums and this museum?



Betaal did not say anything. Bunty repeated the question. He did not hear any thing. Bunty said Betaal's name a few times. Nobody responded.

Betaal was gone.

Bunty was stunned. He did not know what to do. Because he was unable to see him, he could not even ask others in the museum where Betaal went.

With confusion, fear and memories of a unusual museum visit, Bunty headed towards his home. When he looked at his watch, he was surprised to see that he was late only by five minutes.

He rang the doorbell. His mother opened the door. She asked him if something had happened and why was he looking so bewildered. Bunty did not say anything. He drank a glass of water. He wanted to share the story of his museum visit with his mother but would she believe him?

Betaal was correct. His mother had made bittergourd for lunch. However, bittergourd was the last thing on his mind.

Long long time ago, a museum was constructed in a town. It became the centre of curiosity for dwellers of the town. They had never seen anything like that. People heard that the building had old objects which were on display for museum visitors. People did not know if they could visit it for free. Was it only for rich people or was it for everyone? It was something new. Something which the residents of the town had never seen except for those who had seen a museum in a different town. They were the ones telling other people that museums were places where unusual objects from across the world could be seen at one place.

It was new. It was unusual. It had everyone's attention. To go or not to go inside the museum was the question.



In a small room inside the museum building, two gentlemen were discussing about a pair of earrings. It was a pair of silver drop earrings with an ornate outer rim and lapis lazuli set in the middle.

One of the gentlemen said, "According to the information given to us, this piece once belonged to the queen of a tribe in Afghanistan." The other gentleman said, "Well, it does look royal." The conversation went further.

"This exquisite piece of jewellery should be enjoyed by everyone. Imagine travelling to Afghanistan without leaving this town."

"Hahaha...indeed but before we display it there is a lot to be done. We need to give it a number, dig more information about it, if possible clean it and voila! it will be ready for everyone."

"Do you think we will have visitors coming to the museum?"

"Of course! we will have everyone coming. This is just the beginning. Soon the place will be thriving with people."

"How can you be so optimistic, Vikram?"

"Well, if we show our visitors objects they have never seen, specimen of plants and animals they have only heard of, if we treat our visitors in a congenial manner and make sure that the museum is for everybody who is interested in it, we will definitely have people coming in gradually."

"I like your confidence Vikram but what if in spite of all our efforts we still have very few visitors coming in to see what we want to show them."

"In that case, this Vikram will become a Betaal and compel visitors to come to the museum. I am sure nobody would say no to a free guided tour of the museum. Hahaha!"

"Free and spooky"

"Free, funny and spooky"

"Haha, how is your daughter doing Vikram? Is she well-settled in this town now?"

"She is. You know sometimes I wish my family members had the same passion about museums and history just as we have."

"One never knows, Vikram. Maybe in future our children and their children will appreciate our work."

"Yes, one can only hope."

"And if they don't, well, you will be there as a Betaal hovering around the museum building to inspire them."

"Yeah, I will be an aerial muse."

"Oh I am sure you will be excellent at it"

"Hahah, back to work now. Let's see what more can the earring reveal to us."



Bunty was telling his mother about his plan to visit the museum. His mother said, "Your great grandfather worked there when the museum was inaugurated for the public. I have only heard about him. Your grandmother said that he was a crazy fellow. He liked his museum and everything about it too much. It has been a long time since I have visited the museum. Let's go there together, Bunty." His mother said with a grin.

Bunty was more than happy.

Bunty remembered Betaal. Would he be there too?



Do visit a museum!

You never know what you will find there.

You never know who you will find there.





Created by Shruti Gautam